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ABSTRACT

Various terms have been used to describe adult educators, including change agents, facilitators, helpers, leaders, and most typically, teachers. Although advocacy is defined by Webster as the act of pleading the cause of another, or in defending a particular proposal or future, it is obviously a term that can be used to champion the cause of human and societal development through adult education programs and organizations. In advocacy for the adult as learner, the emphasis is on the act of promoting constructive behavioral changes in adults that enhance the affective dimension of the adult as a learner and encourage a greater degree of personal autonomy and direction over subsequent learning and development behavior and experiences. Successful advocacy results in the ability to reach previously unattainable learning and development objectives and the ability to recycle existing and newly acquired knowledge and skills in new areas of application beyond those originally perceived and commonly used. A typology of advocacy for empowerment of the adult as learner includes Type One--Personal Advocacy (a one-on-one relationship in which the advocate provides guidance, counseling, or facilitative behavior with one or more adults); Type Two--Direct Advocacy (in which advocates not having the proximity of personal contact are aware of and identify with individuals or groups of adults as learners from their professional or societal positions); and Type Three--Indirect Advocacy (in which the advocate is not identified as such and has no relationship with individuals or groups of adults as learners who ultimately benefit from the empowerment process). (KC)

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Advocacy: New Role for Adult Educators

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Abstract

Adult educators over the world have been described with various terms including change agents, facilitators, helpers, leaders, and most typically, as teachers. Although advocacy is defined by Webster as the act of pleading the cause of another, or in defending a particular proposal or future, it is obviously a term which can champion the cause of human and societal development through adult education programs and organizations. In advocacy for the adult as learner, the emphasis is on the act of promoting constructive behavioral changes in adults which enhance the affective dimension of the adult as a learner and encourage a greater degree of personal autonomy and direction over subsequent learning and development behavior and experiences.

Successful advocacy results in ability to reach previously unattainable learning and development objectives and the ability to recycle existing and newly acquired knowledge and skills in new areas of application beyond those originally perceived and commonly utilized.

A typology of advocacy for empowerment of the adult as learner includes Type One/Personal Advocacy, Type Two/Direct Advocacy, and Type Three/Indirect Advocacy.

ADVOCACY: NEW ROLE FOR ADULT EDUCATORS

As adult education programs develop and become increasingly important to occupational and career success there are those increasing numbers of adults as learners on the periphery of such services who do not participate. This group includes the poor, the unemployed, the poorly educated, and minorities (Cross & McCartan, 1984) that are beyond the mainstreaming efforts of established and traditional adult education. In reference to these and other unserved adults the process of advocacy offers one additional process through which equity and opportunity for learning and development can be realized. The process of advocacy empowers the learner to participate as a recipient of educational services and ultimately to personally take charge of their own learning and development. The personalization of the advocacy process is at the heart of empowering the adult as learner.

Although advocacy is defined by Webster (1976) as the act of pleading the cause of another, or in defending a particular proposal or cause, it is obviously a term which can champion the future of human and societal development through adult education programs and organizations. In its adult education usage, advocacy reflects on its previous identification with law and legal advocacy as well as the social and behavioral sciences wherein those concerns are directed to the equality for participation in learning and development opportunities.

The advocacy movement emerged in the mid-1960s as a reaction to the concern for broad social functions wherein professionals felt disposed to aid the disadvantaged through action for these groups and to strengthen there own abilities to effectively deal with established institutions (Argyris & Schoon, 1974). Although the advocacy movement has spread from law to medicine, architecture, social work and community planning it is only until more recent times that advocacy in its traditional forms has been found in the literature of adult education (Oaklief, 1985).

In the education enterprise, the concept of advocacy can unleash the vitality and promise of existing programs as well as relating to those not served or those underserved by traditional institutions and methodologies.

In this same light adult educators, by reflecting on their traditional program successes, might progress beyond the limits of their predominating adult education

practices. This "escape", (Houle, 1984, p.5) suggests the examination of alternative designs for learning and education.

Traditional adult educator roles are necessary in the planning and conduct of educational activities and in creating environments for adult learning and development. Over the years such programatic efforts of formalized education in schools, colleges, universities; the educational service organizations such as extension, libraries, museums, and the voluntary efforts such as religious and community programs have related to the expressed needs of millions of adults from all social and economic areas. Success speaks for itself, however, untold millions of economically and educationally disadvantaged adults are removed from the current of prevalent adult education organizations. In spite of their well planned and financially lubricated designs, those who may need support and assistance with their learning and development potentials are on the periphery of the main streaming efforts of existing educational programming.

Although advocacy is used in the context of this paper to cover a broad range of activities from individual rights to intelligent consumer education, the activating behavior is through some modality of adult education or related organization. The basic direction of this paper is a plea for adult education to broaden its helping techniques, its theoretical constructs, and its professional role definitions in the effort to reach those adults not normally touched by traditional adult education programs and services and to serve those traditional audiences in more appropriate and self-sustaining ways than is the current practice.

It is apparent that need has generated the challenge for adult educators to work as generalists to focus their skills and resources on solving a variety of human problems; to serve as indicators and locators of human development injustice; to become helpers in the learning and development process, and to activate themselves as advocates in special societal, cultural, and economic settings.

Adult education has a rich history of both theory and principles for the practice of adult educators. Advocacy, for the adult as a learner, carries an assumption that learning and living are coterminous as suggested by Lindeman (1961).

Advocacy for Learner Empowerment

Advocacy for empowerment of adults as learners is one of the rarely applied principles of the concept.

The empowerment of adults as learners involves the acceptance and development of an agenda for preserving basic human rights and a resolution for institutional change in higher education. Essentially, empowerment for learning encompasses the basic ideas set forth by Lindeman (1961) and applied by Knowles (1980) in that individuals can and should develop responsibility for their own learning. In this emphasis from education to learning, organized education will need to turn loose its traditional hold on the education process, primarily as information providers. The alternative process involves a self-directed, experiential, and problem solving approach to adult education wherein learners exercise their individual rights to not only ownership of the learning process but also equality in opportunity to participate and exerce a choice in such areas as the geographical location and timeliness of educational opportunity (Oaklief, 1987)

The implications for self-determined learning and education in the learning society, as observed by Cross (1978), are to make adults stronger, better-informed, and more self-directed rather than to become increasingly dependent on others to tell them what, when, where, and how to learn. Adult learners increasingly will need to be able to link their needs with appropriate resources.

A Typology of Advocacy Behavior

The advocate has impact on the improvement of adult learning in a variety of ways which for reasons of clarity and briefness are categorized as personal or Type one advocacy, direct or type two advocacy, and indirect or type three advocacy. The typology is based upon the nature of intervention and facilitation between the adult as learner and the advocate.

Type One- Personal Advocacy

Type one or personal advocacy is described as a typical one-on-one relationship in which the advocate provides guidance, counselling, or facilitative behavior with one or more adults. In this relationship the overall intent is for the advocate and the adult as learner to mutually explore, diagnose, plan, and implement a series of activities aimed at resolving specific problems, roadblocks, or negative motivations for personal learning and development. Characteristics of type one advocacy would include but not be limited to the following:

1. Advocate and learner see each other face-to-face wherein personal example, demonstration, suggestion, and support are the prevalent modalities for the adoption of new behaviors on the part of the adult as learner.

2. The empowerment process may be facilitated as much by the caring and personable behavior of the advocate as in their use of any applied teaching or facilitative techniques. In this process the adults as learners are dependent on the advocate for social context and emotional safety as suggested by Mouton and Blake (1984).

3. The advocate is familiar with the social, economic, and cultural environment of the learner(s).

Type Two- Direct Advocacy

Those advocates not having the proximity of personal contact but yet are aware of and identify with individuals or groups of adults as learners from their professional or societal positions are representative of type two advocacy. These advocates, by reason of their social, occupational, or professional positions are disposed to bring considerable impact on the empowerment of adult learning and development. Although type two advocates may not be personally acquainted with the beneficiaries of their efforts, the impact can be directly felt by learners and identified with specific advocates. A few of the characteristic of type two advocacy include:

1. Advocates choose to facilitate their advocacy through the influence of their social, occupational, or professional position.

2. Type two advocacy is reflected through programming and development strategies, administrative and supervisory functions, and advisory activities with a wide variety of adult education programs, organizations and community programs.

3. Progress and accomplishment is still relatively measurable and changes in services to the adult learners are made based upon the advocates proximity to the empowerment process.

Type 3- Indirect Advocacy

The third advocacy level for empowerment of the adult as learner is associated with professional and social movements. At this level the advocate is not identified as such and has no relationship with individuals or groups of adults as learners who ultimately benefit from the empowerment process.

Although the participation of type three advocates is difficult to identify and analyze their impact is real. In either the short or long run advocates may have significant results on the implementation of new or existing programs for the empowerment of adults as learners. The indirect form of advocacy includes the following characteristics:

1. The contribution of advocates is rarely through personal involvement but more likely to be in the form of financial support, influence through personal power or group power, and through association with the larger cause or movement of the adult learning process.

2. A classic example of type three advocacy relates to contributions to political action plans, the provision of in-kind or related resources for furthering the cause of adults as learners. The process would include political and legislative lobbying for adults as in support of the vision of lifelong learning.

Preadvocacy

The preadvocacy activities in which adult educators are engaged in are primarily designed to involve the adult as learner. The initial criteria for involvement is the availability or accessability of the learner. Any successful advocacy of a personal nature then depends on the learners recognition and expression of their personal feelings and the sharing of environmental and situational circumstances which have controlled their learning and development situation. The preadvocacy period, as well as other stages of personal advocacy may not occur spontaneously so time frames for implementation will vary considerably with each learner situation.

Advocacy

The phases which constitute the framework of advocacy are divided into (1) exploration, (2) understanding, and (4) action as outlined in the helping-learning model by Carkhuff & Anthony (1979). In the exploration stage of personal advocacy, the advocates role is primarily to help the learner explore their immediate situation. At this stage the learner identifies those motivations for learning and development as well as the roadblocks. This is done specifically in terms as to how the learner tends to deal with these problems.

After the learner identifies their situation clearly, the next step involves consideration of the immediate meaning that his or her situation has in store relative to learning and development. Understanding on the part of the adult as learner requires translating awareness of immediate feelings into personally relevant meanings. The focus here is away from blaming outside causes for a particular problem and on how the learner is or can be responsible.

In the transition to action, the adult as learner moves from a personalized feeling about problems and obstacles and arrives at a personalized goal which is designed to directly address those factors which have prevented accomplishment of learning or development objectives. Goal refinement moves from general statements to specific, measurable objectives and the ways and means for accomplishment.

The process defined as personal advocacy has similarities in the reflection and action process of conscentization (Freire, 1970) and the action agenda of management by objectives (Drucker, 1974). Direct advocacy does not involve the advocate and the learner in the process as mutual participants as in personal advocacy. In both direct and indirect advocacy the implementation is of a strategic nature in which the design, the implementing forces, and the delivery are provided by an organization, program, or system. The adoption of the desired behavior in any type of advocacy still depends on the adults as learners and their desire to further develop their personal learning and development potential.

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